



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **Bay Area man charged with engaging in sex with minors in Cambodia** *Case highlights international cooperation to target child sex tourists*

SAN FRANCISCO – Accompanied by agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a 49-year-old Bay Area man returned from Cambodia to San Francisco today where he faces charges that he engaged in illicit sexual conduct with underage girls in that Southeast Asian nation.

Michael John Koklich, a.k.a. Michael Light, is accused in a two-count indictment handed down March 28 by a grand jury in San Francisco of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in foreign places, a charge that carries a maximum sentence of up to 30 years in prison.

Koklich was arrested February 17 by the Cambodian National Police in Phnom Penh on suspicion of sexually exploiting two girls, ages 11 and 13. When police sought to arrest Koklich, he attempted to flee, crashing his motorcycle into a police barricade and injuring a local police officer.

The indictment against Koklich stems from a three-month, multi-agency investigation involving ICE special agents in San Francisco and Bangkok, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, and the Cambodian National Police. The case is being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California. The Department of Justice Office of International Affairs also assisted in the investigation.

The probe began after a non-governmental organization, Action Pour Les Enfants, contacted ICE's attaché office in Bangkok to report that Koklich had been spotted with several young Cambodian girls.

"Individuals cannot escape criminal prosecution by committing sex crimes overseas. As made evident by this indictment, our partners in law enforcement are committed to protecting children from sexual exploitation both here and abroad," said United States Attorney Kevin V. Ryan. "I thank the Cambodian National Police, ICE, and the Diplomatic Security Service for their outstanding collaboration on this case."

According to an affidavit in the case, Koklich traveled to Cambodia and allegedly engaged in sexual relations with the two minors, beginning in January 2006. He allegedly paid the girls \$10 to \$20 for each encounter.

Following Koklich's arrest, U.S. and Cambodian investigators executed search warrants at his two Phnom Penh residences. There, in addition to an array of sexual paraphernalia, agents found a diary where Koklich detailed his sexual exploits, as well as copies of newspaper articles about Americans arrested for having sex with Cambodian minors.

Earlier this week, the Cambodian government expelled Koklich, paving the way for his return to the United States. He is expected to make his initial appearance in federal court tomorrow morning at 9:30 a.m. before Magistrate Judge James Larson.

"This indictment is a direct result of the extraordinary cooperation we received from Cambodian law enforcement and our counterparts at the Department of State," said Charles DeMore, special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigations in San Francisco. "Some pedophiles mistakenly believe they can escape detection and prosecution by committing child sex crimes overseas. We are putting pedophiles on notice that ICE and its law enforcement partners here and abroad stand ready to pursue and prosecute those who sexually exploit children."

"Protecting others is the primary mission of the Diplomatic Security Service, and there is no greater or more noble cause than the protection of our children," said Joe Morton, director for the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service. "As public servants and law enforcement officers we have a duty to strike at the atrocity of child sexual predation as forcefully as possible."

Koklich lives part of the year in the Bay Area in a recreational vehicle, which he parks in various locations, often in Santa Rosa. According to the case affidavit, Koklich told ICE agents that he spends eight to nine months of the year in Cambodia, and travels back to California in the summer to earn money to finance his lifestyle in Southeast Asia. ICE agents say Koklich sells jewelry and other items he purchases in Southeast Asia at flea markets in the area.

Koklich is one of the first northern California residents prosecuted on child sex tourism charges under the provisions of the PROTECT Act. The PROTECT Act substantially strengthened federal laws against predatory crimes involving children outside the United States by adding new crimes, increasing sentences, and modifying the burden of proof requirements for federal prosecutors to bring charges. President Bush signed the PROTECT Act into law three years ago this week.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*